

[Marie Haggerty--Worcester #2]

X - not as good as Yankee gentlewoman & too much "false [standards?]" better to use that for the [genteel-?] woman story

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. Living Lore in

New England

TITLE Mrs. Marie Haggerty - Worcester #2,

WRITER Emily B. Moore

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STATE Massachusetts

WORKER Mrs. Emily Moore

ADDRESS 84 Elm Street, Worcester, Mass.

DATE OF INTERVIEW February 20, 1939

SUBJECT Living Lore

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NAME OF INFORMANT Mrs. Marie Haggerty

ADDRESS 63 Austin Street, Worcester, Mass.

Name Emily B. Moore

Title Living Lore

Assignment Worcester

Topic Mrs. Marie Haggerty

I had invited Mrs. Haggerty out to lunch at an inexpensive but attractive downtown restaurant. The little lady donned her best for the occasion and was obviously delighted with such a "treat". She took the greatest pains in selecting her luncheon, ate slowly, savoring each bite with delight and finished with reluctance.

"You know being out like this for lunch is simply elegant. I haven't been invited to eat out since poor Pa died. This reminds me of the days when I worked, and didn't even have to brew myself a cup of tea. When I worked for Mrs. French, I was second girl then, and even if I did have to wait on table, when it came time for me to eat, I was served just like the rich folks. I never had any trouble with the other help, for them days, serving girls was almost always big and buxom, and such a mite was I, well — I dunno, mebbe they was sorry for me being so little, they never picked fights. with me.

"My, but aren't the dishes pretty and the napkins. Makes me homesick for those days when I was in service. You know I like things nice, but there's no use pretending, I can't have them that way now. The boys don't like me to fix things up much. I tried just once after Pa died. I was having company at the house, and I kinda put things on a little fancy, like the rich people do, but the boys made so much fun of me, I vowed I'd never do it

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again. If Pa had been livin', they'd known better than to laugh at me. Pa would have socked them.

Pa always knowed I was used to better things, and he always tried hard to get them for me. Once he came home with a diamond ring for me. I knew he couldn't afford it, and I was afeared to wear it, thinkin' 2 as how he might not have come by it honestly. I didn't want to question him though. He might feel bad. I never wore the ring and not long ago, Marie, my daughter, had it set over for herself. Two or three years after Pa died, I found where the poor man had paid for it bit by bit. Poor Pa, he was a good man.

“You know I like to think of how I met Pa. I was working for an elegant high-class Jewish family, and we stayed at the Touraine Hotel in Boston. I had a room by myself but I had to take care of a small baby and I was lonesome. They'd go out nights and leave me with the baby all alone. I couldn't leave the baby and there wasn't much I could do, because the baby slept right in the room with me. The lady said if I'd stay with her she'd take me to Europe, but I was scart of boats, so I got another opening to be a nurse girl. That was my specialty.” The little lady drew herself up and patted her soft white hair. “I always loved children. I took care of two children, lovely children they was. Do you know when the boy was married, he invited me to his wedding just like I was rich folks. They was an awful nice family — so refined and kind. We went to the beach every summer and what a place it was. They had two saddle horses and two horses for carriage and garden work. They had four cows for their own use, and there was three men to work around the grounds and two coachmen. Everything was elegant. They had a playground for the children and it was kept up swell, better than most public playgrounds. We had lots of good times, especially when the mistress went away. She'd be gone to 3 Europe for months at the time and the mister would let us ride all over the Cape with the coachman and the children.”

“Did your folks up in New Brunswick like to have you doing house work? I suppose they would have liked you to come home to them.”

"But my dear, it wasn't housework I did." There was scorn in the gentle voice. "I was a nurse maid or a second girl — never just an ordinary girl out to service. My aunts and uncle were very glad to have me working for such nice people — real high-class people. I had a good home and I was treated good. Now if I'd a gone into a factory to work, the folks would have been worried. The girls in the shops never made over six or seven dollars, and them that dressed so well on that, and paid their board, too, made people lift their eyebrows. I was lots better off, for I got seven or eight dollars a week, my room and it was always a nice one, and the best of food. I was really next thing to a lady's maid for when the children went to bed, often the mistress would let me hook her dress, or brush her hair, and all the time I'd be doing them things, she'd be talkin' to me, just like I was her equal. Every woman I ever worked for always admired my slightness of form. The Jewish woman I worked for used to tell me I was 'queenly' and refined and that was why she wanted me to stay with her.

"I always had good jobs, and as I said, we usually worked by twos, another girl and myself. A body didn't have to show references for jobs like they do now, but that wasn't the half of it. You got hired by your looks, and even if you looked honest, they would test you out.

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Why onct I was making up a bed, and right beside the bed was a five dollar bill. I knowed nobody dropped that for nuthin', so I didn't know if I should pick it up and tell them, or what, but my face burnt like fire, for I knowed I was gettin' tested. I left it there all the time I worked in the room and when I got done, I put it on the bureau, and put a vase over the end, so to make sure it didn't blow off. I was just going out of the room when the madam came in. I often think what would've happened if she'd come in while I was smoothin' the bill out — would she believe I was goin' to put it on the bureau. I don't think so, for I was so new there. They often let food and fancy cakes around, just to test us, but I learnt my lesson early on that. Onct I just had my hand on a fancy cake in the parlor, and I got such a crack on my hand, and when I looked up, it was the cook. She grabbed me and pulled

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me back to the kitchen and made me set down and eat my fill of fancy cakes and told me never to take anything that was outside the kitchen, for it was always a trick to see how honest we was.

“Oh dearie me, I wish my Marie had a job like I had when I was young. She's a waitress in one of those Greek restaurants you know. Why she has to be as nice to 'trash' as she is to anyone else. There's all kind of people come in there — if she just had a nice job as a nurse maid, I'd be so happy.

“Pa and I used to talk about what we hoped our children would be when they grew up. We always thought they were the best children — I guess all fathers and mothers think that. We made them all finish high school. Pa and I didn't have much education but we wanted our 5 children should — so they could have a chance to become high-class people. We sent Kitty, my youngest daughter, to Normal School, because Pa always wanted one of his daughters to be a school teacher. I don't know why things never turn out the way you want them.

“When Pa and I got married, his uncle set him up in the grocery business in Cambridge and we got along swell. But he had a nervous breakdown from working too hard and the doctor said he had to change his business and go out in the country to live. We moved to Whitinsville and Pa went to work at the machine shop on the trucks and teams. I didn't like it there. Most of them people were just mill people. They didn't know anything, not high-class at all. Pa knew I didn't like living with 'em so he got a job with the Electric Light Company, and we moved to Worcester. Then he got to be a foreman and we bought a house down in Millbury. My, we were happy there until Pa died. He didn't leave much money — it wasn't his fault, though. We always tried to give the children the best and that took money.

“I didn't mind that there wasn't much left for me because I knew Pa meant well, but it left me depending on the children and they got their own troubles. Pa would turn over in his

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grave if he knew I went out washing and cleaning, but I have to. The children are good but they're too busy to bother with me much. Pa never denied me a solitary thing when he was livin', but now, if I didn't watch out for myself, nobody'd care what I had.

“Of course I don't go out workin' for just anybody. After all I wasn't used to workin' for cheap people and I don't do it now. I have 6 my special customers — all real nice people. I don't mind going out to work — I'm independent and that's something. But I won't be bowin' to anybody. When I worked for Dr. F—he was fine, but when that wife of his got home from the hospital, I left. She was one of those that never had anything till she married. I've heard — though I don't know if it's true — she was a cook herself. She tried to boss me around and I left. Them people aren't quality and I'd go hungry afore I'd work for 'em. A body's got to have some pride. I was brought up good and I got my self-respect. I like to do favors for people, but I'm no slave. Now, with you, I'm like your mother, and you even take me out, like today, and never onct did you say I was a ‘maid’ or what-you-may-call-it, not as how'd bother me none. I like nice homes and nice fixings, and can't abide them that don't like them.

“My land, if I hadn't met Pa and married him, who knows, mebbe I'd be a lady companion now. That's what I always wanted to be; go traveling around, seeing things, and goin' places, wearing nice clothes. Lan' sakes, I don't know what I'd do if I didn't have the League Shop (Junior League Economy Shop) That shop is a life saver for me, who's used to good clothes and the like. Marie don't bother much, but Kitty likes to fuss me up. Poor Kitty, she like to broke my heart; I always wanted her to marry her own kind, but she married a Jewish boy. She's doin' all right for herself and the children, and Aaron is a nice boy, and I don't think his mother liked it any better than I did, so that's a consolation.

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“Now you got me talkin' on Pa again. Oh, yes, I was goin' to tell you how I met him. Well, when I was living with those folks that went to the Cape, Pa was the grocery 'salesman' and come for orders three times a week. My, I can even hear him now, for he was a great

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whistler, and very jolly. I could hear him a mile off, and I usually went out near the back, never letting him know, of course, but I always managed to make him see me, and he'd come and talk. He rode a horse and buggy, and they didn't deliver mail them days, so I would be on my way, usually to the post office, and he would drive me there and back. He usually had a dog in the seat beside him, and what a jolly, red-cheeked lad he was, with blue eyes and light hair. He always had a smile. After a while, we got to keeping company, and we used to drive around the Cape Sundays. I remember my first date; it was after the 10 o'clock mass, and how I blushed and fumed. I couldn't speak for a half hour, but he was so kind and decent. Poor Pa.

"I knowed Pa for three summers, before we got engaged, and I well remember that day. It was Sunday afternoon, and he come by with his horse and buggy. It was such a nice day, and hot, and the horse was all sweat, so he tied up the horses and we went a-walkin'. We walked all down by the water, and he was very quiet, and there was people all around, so he said, 'Kitten', he always called me 'Kitten', 'Let's walk through this little woods, 'tain't very thick.' Wells sir, I felt something was 'bout to come, and I didn't know what. Well, we walked 8 for an hour or more, and then we set down on a tree stump, and while I was just pickin' grass and chewin' on it, he outs withit, and asks me to get married. First I was glad and said I would, but then I was suddenly struck with the way he asked me. 'twaren't like any proposal I'd ever heard of. I always thought when I was asked to be married, he'd do it kinda grand like — get down on his knees mebbe. Wasn't I the fool? Well, can you imagine what I did? I gave him one look and I ran away from him right down to the water where all the people was. He came after me and then I got to feelin' how silly I was, so I told him I wanted to go home. We did and I went right into the house without even saying good-bye.

"When I got to my room and got quieted down I decided definitely I wouldn't marry him at all. But can you believe it, the next time I saw him and it wasn't for two days, he started to tease me about actin' so and can you imagine it, I couldn't help but feelin' sorry for him so I told him I didn't mean to act so. So that was the end of it. I married him."

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Luncheon time was long over and the waitress had begun to stare, so I decided it was time for us to depart. Mrs. Haggerty, thrilled by the luncheon and excited over her tale of meeting “Pa”, was pink-cheeked and smiling. It was one of the “big moments” of the little lady's drab life.